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AUTHOR	Matheny, David L.
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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to determine if the "comparative advantages" debate case is a legitimate and logical approach to affirmative case construction in college and high school debate. The study population totaled 25 high school debate directors and 40 college and university debate directors. Four tape-recorded debates, in which an affirmative team presented a "typical" comparative-advantages case, were sent to coaches for critique and evaluation, structured around several suggested questions. The objective of the study was to develop models to aid coaches and students in developing their comparative-advantages cases. The models also could eliminate the confusions present in textbooks and articles concerning speaker responsibilities and the proper organization of such cases. In general, however, the study was disappointing. The population sample was too small and the general nature of some critiques made evaluation difficult. However, the comparative-advantages method is an acceptable form of case construction although a model case seems difficult to organize. (Author/DE)

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Development of a Working Model of the Comparative Advantages Approach to Affirmative Debate Case Construction

David L. Matheny
Kansas State Teachers College
1200 Commercial
Emporia, Kansas 66801

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
INTRODUCTORY SECTION	
Summary	1
Background for the Study	2
Methodology	5
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	
Results	6
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENCATIONS	
Conclusions	8
SUPPLEMENTARY AND APPENDIX MATERIALS	
References	9
Appendix A (Case Outlines)	10
Appendix B (Suggested Questions)	15

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if the "comparative advantages" debate case is a legitimate and logical approach to affirmative case construction in college and high school debate. If so, further purposes were to: (1) develop an acceptable, standardized model of a comparative advantages debate case; (2) attempt to clarify the changed duties and responsibilities of the negative debaters in meeting the challenges posed by the comparative advantage approach; and (3) provide a means of distributing the completed affirmative and negative models to college and high school debate directors and their students. Hopefully the models could aid coaches and students in developing their comparative advantages cases and eliminate the confusions present in textbooks and articles concerning speaker responsibilities and the proper organization of such cases.

The study population consisted of twenty-five (25) high school debate directors from a five state area and forty (40) college and university debate directors from throughout the United States.

Four tape recorded debates, in which an affirmative team presented a "typical" comparative advantages case were sent to coaches for their critique and evaluation. The critiques were structured around several suggested questions by the investigator. The critiques were then returned to the investigator for evaluation by him and three consultants.

General conclusions were: (1) the affirmative team need not show an inherent evil in the present system; (2) the affirmative team needs to present, in the first speech, a detailed specific plan; (3) the affirmative need not recognize or agree with "goals" of the status quo; (4) the affirmative must show that their advantages are significant and unique; (5) the affirmative team need not prove that their advantages do not preclude other advantages in the status quo; (6) the affirmative does not assume a greater degree of responsibility for demonstrating the practicality of its plan; (7) the standard negative approaches are adequate for most case refutation; (8) negative plan attacks should occur earlier in the debate; and (9) the standard concepts of "burden of proof" and "presumption" do not change because of comparative advantages construction.

In general, the study was disappointing. The population sample was smaller than the investigator had hoped for and the general nature of some critiques made evaluation difficult. However, the comparative-advantages is an acceptable form of case construction although a "standardized" case seems impossible to organize.

Background for the Study

Intercollegiate and high school debate participation increases each year. The increase in both numbers of schools sponsoring debate activities and numbers of students participating in the activities has resulted in the hiring of more personnel specifically to direct forensic activities. Many of the new debate directors, especially at the high school level, come to their jobs unprepared to cope with the theoretical aspects of debate coaching.

Much of the status of an academic field can be determined from an analysis of the nature of its research and unfortunately, for the new and often poorly trained debate coach, a review of speech literature reveals little research related directly and specifically to the many practical problems of argumentation and debate theory. More disturbing is the fact that most of the present research was completed by people other than an experienced debate coach.

A primary area of confusion today, to both experienced and novice debate coaches lies in the area of affirmative case construction. For the past five years "comparative advantages" cases have been employed with increasing frequency, replacing the traditional "need-plan" method of organization. To some, familiar with the area of forensics, this represents a more realistic appraisal of the debate situation and therefore, a change for the better.

However, these coaches differ among themselves on the proper organizational make-up of the case and the resultant changed duties of the affirmative and negative speakers. Others, including many experienced coaches, take the position that a comparative advantages case cannot be effectively utilized in a debate. They directly, or by implication, refer to this type of case as confusing, indirect, negative in its approach, strategically weak, ineffective and imprudent.

Definition and delineation of the essential properties of comparative advantages case construction have been sparse and contradictory.

Musgrave[1], as early as 1945, advocated the use of the comparative advantages approach to affirmative analysis but debaters and coaches did not accept the new approach immediately. Musgrave[2], in a later revision, suggested that the traditional "need-plan" approach was "entirely too vague and fuzzy" and that the advantages approach was more consistent with the normal process of decision making.

Kruger discarded the approach in one paragraph because it deviated from the traditional need-plan or problem-solution analysis. He states, "...this is an indirect and somewhat confusing attempt to show that there really is a need for changing the status quo; for if the affirmative program would result in some important gain, the absence of that gain is really a defect in the status quo."[3] In concluding, he indicates that the comparative advantages case is self-contradictory.

Freeley, in less than a page, suggests that the comparative advantages case can be used "when both the affirmative and negative agree that the problem exists."[4] He then follows this statement by presenting an example with which the negative almost certainly would disagree.

Ehninger and Brockriede, authors of a highly respected and widely used text, do not discuss the approach.[5]

McBurney and Mills, in one paragraph, define the comparative advantages case as a case "comparing the present plan with the affirmative proposal on the basis of results. The cause-for-action or 'need' argument is given much less importance and is handled indirectly ...showing, by implication, a need for a change."[6]

Windes and O'Neil do not discuss comparative advantages. Instead, they definitely state than an affirmative "must first show a need for a change and then present and develop a plan for a particular type of change."[7]

Mills, in a short discussion, describes the approach as one in which "the cause-for-action point may be played down, developed indirectly, or developed as fully as in the traditional (need-plan) case. In any event, the general idea of this approach is the comparison of the status quo with the affirmative plan on the basis of results for the purpose of predicting improvements."[8]

Moulton is even more confusing. He indicates that the comparative advantages case "has a legitimate and necessary part in affirmative case development. The comparative advantage case is especially effective when it is difficult to prove a substantial problem area exists."[9] This seems directly to contradict Freeley. Later, in an analysis of a college debate, Moulton continually refers to the affirmative case as a "comparative advantages case with an attendant need argument."[10]

This disagreement and confusion over the merits of comparative advantages cases has recently moved from text books to speech journals.

Newman laid the groundwork for popularizing the comparative advantages approach by stating that the affirmative "should not be required to show that the world is going to hell in a wheelbarrow before they can earn a debate judge's vote. We have not, I hope, cast off the shackles of Aristotelian entailment after much struggle merely to be ensnared in the traps of inherency and compellingness."[11]

Kruger, in a series of articles in Speaker and Gavel,[12] and later in the JAFA contended that "we should also continue to strive to make as clear as possible such concepts as inherency and what it entails so that affirmatives will not be additionally penalized by fallacious negative arguments or by the misconceptions of many judges of what constitutes the affirmatives burden of proof."[13]

Kruger continued his attack on the comparative advantages approach by defining it as a case which "may contend simply that, although there is no real problem at present, the affirmative proposal would be slightly more advantageous in achieving certain goals than the existing policy" and believes that "a well chosen, truly debatable proposition does not lend itself to comparative advantages analysis." He concludes that "it is time we expurged this term from our debate vocabulary so that well-meaning but misinformed coaches will not be tempted to encourage unwary debaters to try this "refreshingly new" but "confused and illogical approach to debate."[14]

Brock, however, in a defense of the comparative advantages case, attempted to answer three questions concerning the approach and found that "the traditional and the advantages approaches seem logically consistent with each other." He proceeds to outline a "model" advantages case which "must accept the goals and basic assumptions of present policies...a plan which is basically compatible with the present system... the achievement of goals to a <u>significantly</u> greater degree than under the present policies...and be prepared to prove that conditions would improve more by adopting the affirmative plan that they would be implementing any action which is precluded by the affirmative proposal." He believes that by this action the affirmative does "fulfill its burden of proof."[15]

Fadely, while agreeing with Brock that the comparative advantages case is a legitimate approach, does not follow the "model" established by Brock. In fact, Fadely asks: "Is saying that one proposal is better than another equivalent to saying that the latter contains evils?...the answer to this question would be yes."[16] This seems to be arguing that a comparative advantages case indirectly argues need. If this is so, the approach <u>is</u> simply a disorganized need-plan case and therefore not the goal-advantages approach envisioned by Brock.

On the basis of these contradictory textbooks and articles by responsible and respected writers it is clear that the debate community is divided on the role of the comparative advantages case in modern debate theory and practice. Even when authors agree on the approach in principle, major differences exist as to development and presentation of the case.

The purpose of this study was to determine if the comparative advantages case is a legitimate and logical approach to affirmative debate case construction. In the event that the comparative advantages case was found to be a legitimate approach to affirmative debate case construction, further objectives were (1) to develop an acceptable, standardized model of a comparative advantages affirmative case; (2) to attempt to clarify the changed duties and responsibilities of the negative debaters in meeting the new challenged posed by comparative advantages cases; (3) to provide a means of distributing the completed affirmative and negative models to college and secondary school debate directors and their students. Hopefully, the model would aid coaches and students in developing comparative advantages cases and eliminate the present controversies concerning speaker responsibilities and the proper organization of such cases.

Methodology

The study population consisted of high school teachers directing debate programs in accreditated high schools in the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and Missouri and college and university debate directors throughout the United States.

High schools in the particular five state area were selected because of the relatively high quality of debate in these areas. The regional character of the high school sample was dictated by the limited budget.

High school directors were chosen from those schools who actively participate in the National Forensic League or those known to the investigator as having experienced and qualified directors of debate. College and university directors selected included those members of the American Forensic Association District committees for the National Debate Tournament, coaches with teams participating in the 1968 National Debate Tournament and other coaches known to the investigator as being experienced and qualified directors of debate. The selected high school and college directors train approximately four thousand (4,000) debaters per school year.

Data on the comparative advantages case structure was collected in the following manner: Debates, in which an affirmative team presented one of the more popular conceptions of comparative advantages case organization and the negative employed one of the commonly accepted methods of negative refutation, were tape recorded. Four debates were recorded and the same debaters were used in three of the debates to keep delivery factors as constant as possible. Outlines of the four affirmative cases are included in Appendix A. Randomly, each of the selected debate directors received a copy of a debate for his evaluation.

After hearing the tape recorded debate, the coaches were asked to evaluate the debate with emphasis on areas of case construction which cause the most confusion. The investigator included a list of suggested questions for the coaches to answer in their critiques. A copy of the suggested questions is included in Appendix B.

The questions were, of necessity, rather open-ended. The directors were encouraged to give complete answers to all questions in their evaluation. It was hoped that the selection of interested and competent coaches would provide a rather complete response.

Analysis of the data received from the debate directors was made by the investigator and three consultants. Consultants were Dr. William B. English, Director of Forensics, University of Houston (Texas), second place winners at the 1969 National Debate Tournament; Professor Marvin Cox, Director of Forensics, Kansas State Teachers College (Emporia), coach of the first place winners at the 1968 National Debate Tournament; and Mr. Charles White, director of debate at Hutchinson (Kansas) High School, whose teams have been in attendance at the State Debate Tournament for the past three years. This final report incorporates the interpretations of the investigator and the consultants.

Results

Seventeen coaches, all college and university directors of forensics, returned critiques on Debate 1. Nineteen coaches, fourteen high school and five college, returned critiques on Debate 2. Fifteen, eleven high school and four college, critiqued Debate 3 and fourteen, all college and university, returned their critiques on Debate 4. Thus, the results represent the views of forty college and university coaches and twenty-five high school debate coaches.

In an attempt to organize this section of the report, the evaluation of the critiques will follow the structure of the suggested questions in Appendix B.

Question 1. Must the affirmative show an inherent evil in the present system to establish a successful case? The preponderance of coaches indicate that the affirmative need not show an inherent evil. There seemed to be little difference between the opinions of high school and college coaches. A few did respond affirmatively and they indicated "yes" for two reasons: (1) The comparative advantages does not exist; (2) Inherent evil can be equated with the lack of the affirmative advantage existing in the present system.

Question 2. Must the affirmative team present a detailed, specific plan? Where should the plan be located in the speech? By a virtually unanimous decision, the coaches agree that the affirmative must present a detailed specific plan. Almost all agree that the plan should be presented early in the first speech; certainly before the advantages are discussed. Of course it is difficult to evaluate the degree of detail and specificity the coaches demand. Most wrote of the plan explaining structural changes, the general working mechanisms, and the relationship between plan and advantages. Most cautioned against the plan becoming too complex. All four plans in the study were reported adequate; however, the coaches did write that the plan in Debate 4 should be presented earlier in the speech.

Question 3. Must the affirmative recognize and agree with the goals of the present system: If so, did this affirmative team identify goals to your satisfaction? There is no consensus on this question. Most of the people that reported yes were high school coaches. College people seem less worried about goals. The clear statement of goals in Debates 2 and 4 did not seem necessary for the coaches critiquing these debates. The coaches report no great antagonism to goals but they are not necessary in order to have a comparative advantage case.

Question 4. Must the affirmative team show that their advantages are significant, unique and directly attributable to the plan that they present? There is little disagreement that advantages must be significant. The most important qualification mentioned by some was that significance is a relative matter depending on the proposition, the present system and the negative attack. Advantages should be unique and directly attributable to the plan. There was no way to determine whether the coaches equate plan with proposition. The affirmative team in Debate 3 did not fulfull their obligation in this respect.

Question 5. Must the affirmative prove that their advantages do not preclude other advantages in the status quo? Most critics said no. This is not a primary responsibility of the affirmative team. However, the negative team can legitimately raise such an attack and the affirmative must then defend against the change. Many coaches that extended their analysis of this question suggested that it could become the ultimate issue in the debate. The high school coaches didn't seem to understand the question.

Question 6. Does the affirmative in a comparative advantage case assume a greater degree of responsibility for demonstrating the practicality of its plan? The answers to this question were very evenly divided with about sixty percent of the respondants believing that the affirmative does not have a greater degree of responsibility for plan practicality. However, a good many coaches suggested that since this area became the primary point of many negative attacks that the affirmative often had to concentrate more defense in this area.

Question 7. Was the standard negative approach to refutation adequate in this debate? If not, what deficiencies exist to necessitate changes in traditional negative refutation? About seventy percent of the coaches felt that the negative approach in the particular debate they heard was adequate. There is a tremendous disagreement over a "standard" negative approach. The negative in these four debates used the same technique, general refutation in the first speech and a constructive plan attack in the second speech. This was generally accepted by the coaches.

Question 8. Assuming that the negative presents objections to the affirmative plan, where in the debate should these objections be launched? There was a fairly even distribution of answers to this question. About one-third of the coaches put the plan attacks in the first speech, about one-third put them in the second speech and about one-third suggest that it makes no difference. This was one question in which high school and college coaches agree. The results vary from accepted debate practice. More coaches seem willing to put the plan attacks in the first speech in theory than in practice.

Question 9. Was the negative attack on plan practicality adequate in this debate? This answer varied, of course, depending upon the debate. In Debate 1, the majority of coaches thought the attack was adequate but not very imaginative. In Debate 2, many felt that the negative failed in plan attack in the debate. The negative was termed adequate in Debates 3 and 4 by a sizable majority.

Question 10. To what degree do the terms "burden of proof", "presumption" and "burden of carrying the debate forward" change in comparative advantages cases? Most coaches felt that no change was indicated in these terms. A few indicated that "the burden of proof" now referred to the securing of advantages but indicated that this makes no big difference in duties during the debate.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine if the comparative advantages case is a legitimate and logical approach to affirmative debate case construction. That question was answered affirmatively. The vast majority of the coaches participating in the study do accept comparative advantages cases as acceptable methods of analyzing debate propositions.

Further objectives in this event were to develop an acceptable, standardized model of a comparative advantages debate case, to attempt to clarify the changed duties and responsibilities of negative debaters in meeting this type of case and to provide a means of distributing the completed affirmative and negative models to high school debate directors and their students.

Actually, the responses indicate that negative duties are relatively unchanged, although some coaches indicated that plan attacks should occur earlier in the debate. To develop a standardized comparative-advantages case seems at this point impossible. The four models sent to coaches, greatly varied in concept, were all accepted by the coaches as acceptable comparative advantage cases. Even debate 4, which neither the affirmative debaters or their coach, felt was a comparative advantage case, was accepted as comparative advantage by all the college coaches who heard it. Any of these models could be distributed to the high school people as outlined in the purposes section.

The biggest failure of the study was in the population sample. After great shows of interest only about one-half of those coaches contacted actually returned useable critiques. The return of high school coaches was especially disappointing. The return reflects an attitude of incompetence and apathy. Many of the coaches feel that their attitude is correct; why expose it on the possibility that it will not reflect majority attitudes? Others wrote to say that they did not feel adequate to write an open-ended critique.

In short, the investigator hoped to accomplish more in the study.

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Appendix A

Affirmative Case Outlines

Affirmative Case Outline - Debate One

I. Statement of Proposition: The Federal Government Should Guarantee a Minimum Annual Cash Income to All Citizens.

II. Statement of Plan: (1) All households, in which the income is below the poverty level, will receive a social dividend sufficient to provide an adequate standard of living; (2) A fifty percent bonus will be paid on earnings to one-third above the poverty level; (3) The I.R.S. will administer the proposal on a monthly basis and the program will be phased in over a three year period; (4) All public transfer cash payments will be eliminated with the exceptions of unemployment compensation and medicare; (5) Programs offering counseling, psychological and therapeutic services to the poor will be expanded.

III. Advantage: There would be continuing economic security for all citizens.

IV. Significance of Plan
   A. It guarantees to <u>all</u> the income necessary for an adequate standard of living.
      1. The poor do not have an adequate standard of living.
      2. Present programs do not guarantee to all an adequate standard of living.

   B. It promotes the psychological reorientation of the poor.
      1. A culture of poverty exists and is self-perpetuating.
      2. A guaranteed income would assist in breaking the cycle of poverty.

   C. It better equips the impoverished to become economically self-sufficient.
      1. The absence of economic security impedes efforts at economic self-sufficiency.
      2. A guaranteed income would better equip the impoverished to become economically self-sufficient.

Affirmative Case Outline - Debate Two

I. Goal: A United Europe, capable of self defense, is desirable.

II. Statement of Proposition: The United States Should Substantially Reduce its Foreign Policy Commitments.

III. Present System Denies Fulfillment of Goal: (1) U. S. domination of NATO has caused a shift in defense responsibility; (2) Current French policies prohibit unity necessary for self defense.

IV. Statement of Plan: (1) The U. S. will withdraw from NATO and the defense of Europe over the next five years; (2) The present U.S. nuclear force in Europe will be turned over to the NATO alliance; (3) The U. S. will withdraw from all co-ordinate treaties consistent with this plan; (4) France may rejoin the alliance at any time.

V. Advantages:
   1. A European responsibility for self defense is established.
   2. Europe is strengthened militarily.
   3. Nuclear deterrence is made more credible.
   4. A base for future Franco-European cooperation is established.
   5. Needless U. S. expenditure is prevented.
   6. The flexibility of U. S. foreign poligy is increased.
   7. The harm of nuclear proliferation is prevented.

Affirmative Case Outline - Debate Three

I. Statement of Proposition: The Federal Government Should Guarantee a Minimum Annual Cash Income to all Citizens.

II. Statement of Plan: (1) All citizens will be guaranteed a minimum annual cash income of $3200 for a family of four, $2030 for a couple or $1570 for an individual; (2) The I.R.S. will administer on a monthly basis, with premiums adjusted quarterly with regional cost of living adjustments; (3) all cash subsidies, unrelated to a constructive return, will be discontinued; (4) will be financed by a transfer of disposal funds with excess revenue derived from the general budget.

III. Advantage: The affirmative proposal provides the most effective response to the problem of poverty.

IV. Points of Analysis:
- A. Current welfare activities are unresponsive to the problem of poverty.
  1. They provide insufficient coverage.
  2. Benefits received are insufficient.
- B. The structure of federal-state public welfare precludes an effective response to poverty.
  1. States and localities control the nature and scope of public welfare.
  2. States and localities are incapable of providing an effective response to poverty.
- C. Federally guaranteed cash constitutes the most effective response to poverty.
  1. It constitutes the most immediate solution.
  2. It constitutes the most efficient solution.
  3. It best assures full coverage of basic needs.
  4. It enhances structural programs.
  5. It provides the credit base necessary to provide for unanticipated needs.

Affirmative Case Outline - Debate Four

I. Statement of Goal: The elimination of poverty and the achievement of social justice, basic security and the opportunity for self realization are the goals of the Great Society.

II. Statement of Proposition: The Federal Government Should Guarantee a Minimum Annual Cash Income to all citizens.

III. The Characteristics of Present Distributive Programs
   1. Financing is achieved through Federal-State matching in which the state retains administrative control.
   2. Categorized eligibility which excludes people in the described problem area.
   3. Frequent provision of assistance in which inkind services are emphasized.

IV. Requisites of an Effective Distributive Program
   1. It should be Federally controlled.
      1. It prevents discrimination.
      2. It is most efficient.
   2. It should guarantee assistance for all.
      1. It should encourage self-improvement.
      2. It encourages social planning.
      3. It serves to encourage mobility.
   3. It should provide assistance in cash.
      1. It provides direct purchasing power without stigmatization.
      2. It provides free participation in a money economy.

Appendix B

Questions suggested to aid in structuring critiques

Suggested Questions

1. Must the affirmative show an inherent evil in the present system to establish a successful case? If so, did this affirmative team show these harms?

2. Must the affirmative team present a detailed, specific plan? Where should the plan be located in the speech? Did this example fulfill plan obligations?

3. Must the affirmative recognize and agree with the "goals" of the present system? If so, did this affirmative team identify goals to your satisfaction?

4. Must the affirmative team show that their advantages are significant, unique and directly attributable to the plan they present? If so, did this affirmative team prove significance and uniqueness?

5. Must the affirmative prove that their advantages do not preclude other advantages of the status quo? If so, did this affirmative fulfill that obligation?

6. Does the affirmative assume a greater degree of responsibility for demonstrating the practicality of its plan?

7. Was the standard negative approach to refutation adequate in this debate? If not, what deficiencies exist that necessitate changes in traditional negative refutation?

8. Assuming that the negative presents objections to the affirmative plan, where in the debate should those objections be launched?

9. Was the negative attack on plan practicality adequate in this debate?

10. To what degree do the standard debate terms "burden of proof," "Presumption" and "burden of carrying the debate forward" change in the comparative advantage approach?